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The American war: Italian culture and Hollywood movies on the Second World War

Daniele Pipitone

Abstract

This article deals with the reception of American narratives on the Second World War in Italy, assuming the key role that myths and memories about the conflict played in post-war Europe and the importance of transcultural exchanges in the mass-media age. Such narratives were not imported to Italy by official US propaganda, but were mainly conveyed by Hollywood war movies, which were centred on the ideas of the righteousness of the conflict and of the fight between good and evil. The article focuses on a specific sector of the Italian audience, that of critics and film reviewers, who played a key role in interpreting the films and in fostering their acceptance – or refusal. Through the analysis of cinema magazines and newspapers, the research outlines how the reception of such movies was influenced by multiple elements, the different political and ideological allegiances, the cultural gap between elite and popular periodicals, and the interactions with Italian myths and memories about the war. Finally, the article compares the results of the inquiry with the rare sources about the reception of American narratives among a mass audience, and underlines the importance of a transnational approach to the study of cultural issues in contemporary history.

Introduction

After the end of the Second World War, as a consequence of the re-opening of the national market to Hollywood products, Italian audiences had contact with a huge number of American war movies dealing with the last conflict. Unsurprisingly, the perspective of the great majority of those movies differed greatly from the memories and the representations of the Second World War that were being elaborated in the country. After all, the United State was the true winner of the war – even if not the only one – the only country which did not directly suffer the impact of the conflict, and the incumbent superpower. Italy, on the contrary, was not only a defeated country, but a nation which had experienced occupation, civil war and a radical political shift from monarchy and Fascism to a (still fragile) republican and democratic regime. Nevertheless, Hollywood war movies had great success, sold millions of tickets and were seen by a large part of the population. They were part of that powerful process of diffusion of American values, narratives and culture that affected all Western Europe after 1945, and that was soon called ‘Americanization’.

The impact of American cultural products and models on Italian society has long since been an object of historical investigation, as well as of political and intellectual debate¹. Yet, while major attention has been paid to such issues as consumerism, individualism, secularization, the impact of American narratives about the Second World War on Italian culture and public discourse has seldom been analysed. A great number of investigations have been conducted on the memory of the last conflict in Italy, from a wide range of perspectives: from the memory of the Resistance, its use and the conflicts it raised², to the removal of traumatic events which fell outside the scope of official narratives (e.g. the Allied bombings or the fights at the eastern border³); from the people’s strategies to give meaning to the shock of the war years⁴, to the role of mourning and of primary needs in re-defining citizenship⁵. Despite their variety and their originality, however, all these studies focused on the memories produced within the country, by different groups or constituencies⁶; very little attention has been paid to the reception of foreign narratives, an aspect which cannot be left unconsidered when studying the highly connected world of the second half of the twentieth century.

It would be useful to recall some reflections recently developed by Aleida Assmann, author of many seminal inquiries on collective memory in contemporary societies:

Until recently – Assmann maintained – the dynamics of memory production unfolded primarily within the bounds of the nation state [...]. Under the impact of global mobility and movements, this has changed fundamentally. Global conditions have powerfully impacted on memory debates and, at the same time, memory has entered the global stage and global discourse. Today, memory and the global have to be studied together, as it has become impossible to understand the trajectories of memory outside a global frame of reference⁷ .

The aim of this essay is to take up Assmann's advice and to investigate the importation of US narratives on the Second World War to Italy, as well as the reception of such narratives by the Italian audience⁸ . More specifically, it focuses on the reception of one of the most effective means of diffusion of American culture in Europe: Hollywood movies. In order to carry out such an investigation, many different sources can be used, each one shedding light on different aspects or, more precisely, on different social groups. In this article, I focus on two main agents of the reception of US movies on the Second World War: the critics, who normally spoke to the cultural elite of the country; and the popular journalists, whose target was a wider audience and who played the role of 'opinion-makers' and 'intermediaries' between movies and spectators. In order to do so, I have considered a range of printed sources: elite reviews; popular magazines; and daily newspapers. The chronological range approximately encompasses the years between 1945 and 1968, which is to say before the social and ideological burst of the late 1960s radically changed the terms of public discourse (and before the Vietnam War became a key issue for political debate). More specifically, I extensively browsed the reviews of Hollywood movies and the articles devoted to American war cinema published by a selection of periodicals, which I identified as particularly representative of the different cultural tendencies of this timespan: the specialized magazines *Bianco e Nero*, *Cinema* and *Cinemanuovo*; *La Stampa* and *L'Unità*, as two examples of moderate and communist press; *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* and *La rivista del cinematografo* for the Catholic realm.

The importation of American movies on the Second World War to Italy

The Second World War has been a favourite subject for American cinema since the very beginning of the conflict itself. From 1940 to the present, Hollywood studios have released hundreds of movies dealing with what has sometimes been called 'the good war' or 'America's finest hour'⁹. Although mainly shot from a US perspective, many of these movies were not exclusively addressed to a domestic audience. Foreign markets had been a primary target of the American film industry since the interwar period¹⁰, and such an international projection dramatically increased after the end of the conflict, when the doors of Western Europe – which had been closed during the German occupation – opened up to Hollywood's products¹¹. As a whole, France, Germany, Britain, Italy and the smaller countries of the Old Continent susceptible to US influence represented a huge market, already accustomed to cinema-going and equipped with a number of facilities (theatres, distribution structures) comparable to American ones. As a consequence, export became a main item in the majors' budgets, and production was adapted accordingly¹². Wartime movies were often modified in order to be sold overseas, and the characters, plots and scenes of post-war films were conceived not to disappoint Italian, French or even German audiences. As an example, the Italian version of *A Walk in the Sun* (Milestone, 1945) underwent the strategic cutting of a scene where American soldiers met a not-so-glorious Fascist officer¹³. Later, in *The Young Lions* (Dmytryk, 1958), Marlon Brando played a German officer who, as the war became more and more cruel, gradually turned against the Nazi regime. As an Italian reviewer underlined, it was a deep change from the original plot of the novel, which, on the contrary, showed the progressive dehumanization of the character: a change that was probably due to the need to sell the movie in Germany – a close US ally, and a key market for Hollywood's products¹⁴.

The strategy worked well: some Second World War movies became real blockbusters, with millions of tickets sold during the months, or even years, of staging in foreign theatres. To give some examples, in 1954–55 *From Here to Eternity* (Zinnemann, 1954) ranked second among the most-viewed movies in the 16 main Italian cities, and *The Caine Mutiny* (Dmytryk, 1954) ranked sixth¹⁵; in 1956, *To Hell and Back* (Hibbs, 1955) was the sixth most-viewed movie in the whole country; in 1958 *The Young Lions* was the fourth¹⁶; in the first year of staging, *The Guns of Navarone* (Thompson, 1961) sold 5,131,000 tickets¹⁷, *The Great Escape* (Sturges, 1963) 3,193,000¹⁸. Such undeniable box office successes are a good reason in itself to investigate the impact of these movies on European (and Italian)

representations of the Second World War. But there is more. As cinema historians have pointed out, the overwhelming majority of Second World War movies offered a very similar, and quite stereotypical, representation of the conflict, thus producing a cumulative effect that is likely to have strengthened their influence on the audience. In fact, Jeanine Basinger explicitly contended that the very 'war movie' genre was born with Second World War films¹⁹, and even a rough survey confirms her assumption: in the overwhelming majority of American movies on the Second World War, we can find stereotypical characters, similar situations, a shared ideological perspective, and many stylistic similarities.

A detailed analysis of such features would exceed the scope of this essay, and would be more a matter of cinema studies than history²⁰. What is important here is to underline that they ended up creating the image of a good war: no matter how cruel, violent or unfair it had been, the Second World War was represented as a right war, a war that had been worth fighting. And this was by all means the most important aspect of American movies on the subject: it could be declared clearly or simply suggested; it could be softened with many nuances or cried out loudly; but in the end, it was always good against evil. The absurdity, the senselessness, the atrocity which characterized many movies on the First World War, or on the Vietnam War, were absent or marginal in Second World War films²¹. Obviously, the Western Allies stood on the right side, Germany and Japan on the wrong one. Russians, often, did not even appear; nor, in fact, did Italians.

The propagandistic effect of such a representation is hard to deny, but it is not the only meaningful element of the movies; nor, perhaps, is it the most important. In fact, the Second World War does not seem to have been a main theme in US propaganda: among the films whose export got support from the Economic Cooperation Administration (Eca) authorities, there was not a single war movie²². And a quick glance at the materials produced by the United States Information Agency (USIS) after 1945 confirms such hypothesis²³.

USIS released hundreds of films, newsreels and documentaries in Italian in the post-war decades, and none of them directly dealt with the Second World War. They celebrated the United States in almost any possible way, showing American democracy in action, underlining freedom and wealth, offering sparkling pictures of modern life in New York City, but they never reminded their audience of the role played by the United States in the war²⁴. That can hardly be considered a coincidence. In a documentary that compared the conditions of Italian cities in 1952 and in 1945, war was barely mentioned, and the cause of the destruction of the cities – the Allied bombings – was never recalled²⁵. A similar omission

can be detected in the press. In 1945, the Psychological Warfare Branch – the army's propaganda office – printed a monthly magazine called *Nuovo Mondo*, which celebrated the strength of the United States and its role in fighting the German aggression. The review ceased publication at the end of the year. Less than 10 years later, USIS started publishing another magazine, *Mondo Occidentale*; from 1954 to 1956, none of its monthly issues contained a single article about the war.

It seems to be quite a drastic shift, even though these examples do not represent a complete survey of American propaganda sources, not even of those addressed to Italy. Things could be different in other geopolitical contexts, such as Asia or Eastern Europe; and even in Italy, USIS's libraries did propose to the public some books about the US' role in the war – but no more than a few²⁶. Generally speaking, and in a context limited to Italy, it can be said that soon after the end of the Second World War and during the Cold War years, US participation in the conflict was no longer considered an effective propaganda theme²⁷.

Such a conclusion must be taken into account when analysing the reception of American war movies in Italy for two connected reasons. On the one hand, the lack of interest shown by the US propaganda machine for the Second World War means that Hollywood war movies can hardly be considered as part of a deliberate international operation. If there were any overt propagandistic intervention in their creation, it was for domestic and not for foreign purposes – such as the support that many movies received from the US army (e.g. *The Halls of Montezuma*, *The Caine Mutiny*, *The Longest Day*). On the other hand, it also means that the same films did not have to interact with a well-established and strongly supported US official representation of the war – which made them the main vehicle for spreading American war narratives in Italy.

To sum up, Hollywood movies dealing with the Second World War were less a product of Cold War propaganda than the reflection of a US national myth – a reflection which, like many myths in the age of mass media, was also a creation. Such myth – which can be synthetically labelled as the myth of the 'good war' – seems to have easily entered the Italian imaginary, probably because of its mainly 'authentic' and 'unintentional' features²⁸. However, in this process it came in contact with a strong and complex corpus of parallel narratives and memories, which were being elaborated by Italian people, politicians and intellectuals within the Italian public discourse: the various nuances that the myth of the Resistance could acquire (the Secondo Risorgimento, the Antifascist war, the class war²⁹); the communist-oriented myth of the USSR³⁰; the complementary stereotypes of the 'good

Italian' and the 'evil German'³¹ ; the often grievous and mournful popular memories of the war years³² . Such powerful, although not univocal, amount of memories necessarily influenced the Italian reception of the image of the Second World War proposed by Hollywood movies, as the following analysis shows.

The reception: the critics

After 1945, when free speech and the free press were restored and authentic public debate became possible again, Italy saw a boom in cultural, political and scientific publications. Even though often ephemeral, journals, reviews and newspapers multiplied and diversified, addressing various social groups and offering different political perspectives³³ . Film magazines were no exception: whether they were tabloids narrating and profiting from Hollywood's star system or elitist reviews analysing national and foreign films, a number of periodicals expressly (and often exclusively) devoted to motion pictures began to appear on Italian newsstands and in bookshops.

Critical reviews were not a complete novelty. Some had started to be published under fascism: one of the most influential magazines, *Bianco e Nero*, was founded in 1937 by the *Centro sperimentale di cinematografia*, the oldest Italian film academy; another important review, *Cinema. Quindicinale di divulgazione cinematografica*, was born in 1936 (and between 1938 and 1943 its director was Vittorio Mussolini, the dictator's son). However, after the *Liberazione*, their numbers dramatically increased³⁴ , along with their freedom to support different artistic and ideological approaches. Generally speaking, they were written by film critics or experts (although cinema studies were not yet an established academic field) and addressed to a restricted audience of high cultural level. They showed quite a low opinion of American war movies, which were usually given little attention and negative evaluations, being considered highly ideological and stereotyped. In fact, critics quickly recognized the features of the genre and did not appreciate them. As early as 1950, John Ford's film *They Were Expendable*, although quite well-approved as a whole, was criticized because of 'the various clichés of the propagandistic genre' it displayed³⁵ – or, in a rougher way, for 'all the military junk' it contained³⁶ . Many other movies were given similar evaluations: *Iwo Jima* (Dwan, 1949)³⁷ , *Stalag 17* (Wilder, 1953)³⁸ , *Between Heaven and Hell* (Fleischer, 1958)³⁹ ; and others were simply dismissed as 'usual war movies'⁴⁰ . Moreover, when a film was appreciated, it was precisely because it somehow fell outside

the standards of the genre; which is to say, because it was not considered just a war movie. Such was the case, for example, of *Battleground* (Wellmann, 1949), the story of a group of soldiers 'trapped' in a French town by the German counter-attack of the Ardennes in winter 1944, which was generally praised because of its lack of rhetoric and of 'programmatic heroism'⁴¹ ; or of *A Walk in the Sun* (Milestone, 1945), which was described as 'a brave and sincere movie [that made one] forget the too-numerous war adventures with the same old wreck-it hero'⁴² .

There were probably many reasons for such a dismissal – not considering the actual quality of the movies, a judgement that does not lie within the historian's domain, nor the general hostility towards Hollywood products shown by many European elite in the post-war years⁴³ . In the first place, there was a sort of annoyance toward a representation of the war that was often perceived as too soft and smooth for a tragedy of such extent. The simplistic and triumphal image of the conflict proposed by American movies was too far removed from the sufferings, the horrors, the sense of moral and material loss that characterized the Italian public discourse⁴⁴ . It is symptomatic that many critics implicitly assumed that a war movie should point out the senselessness and absurdity of any war – in other words, that it should be a pacifist film. In slating Wilder's *Stalag 17* (Wilder, 1953), a critic stated that its characters were at the same time too close and too far from 'an atrocious truth, still vivid in memory', to be accepted⁴⁵ . Another identified in *A Walk in the Sun* the general refusal of the war that, in his opinion, characterized the winners as well as the defeated, all involved in 'a spiritual crisis which has unified, in the hate for the bloody machine, both those who threw bombs from above and those who, trembling, received them'⁴⁶ . And a third, in reviewing *The Enemy Below* (Powell, 1957), identified 'the weakest part of the film' in the idea that 'even at war human feelings are possible', and in the subsequent attempt to 'distinguish among war and war', which prevented the author from issuing a 'neater statement against [all] wars'⁴⁷ .

The critics were outlining not only a specific feature of Hollywood movies on the Second World War, which was at the basis of the myth of the 'good war', but also a substantial difference between American and European (not only Italian) narratives. As one of them penetratingly noted, while the former had lived the war as a traditional conflict between armies, the latter had directly suffered its impact, and this resulted in two different ways of representing it in motion pictures: Americans could still focus on the 'adventures' of their GIs; Europeans could not avoid looking at the suffering of the people⁴⁸ . Another critic

noticed, implicitly referring to American products: ‘the last post-war period, unlike the previous one, did not give us antimilitarist movies, not even movies critical towards the war’⁴⁹. It was a key element, which would distinguish American and European narratives in the following decades. Nevertheless, it also concealed ideological stances: pacifism was a popular watchword in post-war Italy, launched by communists but shared by a wider left-wing area⁵⁰. And it dealt as much with the memories of the last conflict as with the fear for a prospective one, in which Europe would have been devastated. As the majority of film critics in the early post-war years tended to be left-wing oriented (like the majority of intellectuals, in fact⁵¹), we should not be surprised that they adopted a pacifist attitude.

Ideology, in fact, was another key element in the widespread refusal of US narratives: the positive image of the American participation in the war, which was sometimes complex and troubled but often simplistic, self-indulgent and bombastic, generally irritated critics and reviewers. In some cases, such an attitude was labelled as ‘jingoistic rhetoric’⁵², whose ‘venoms’ ended up creating a ‘gross hagiographic representation’⁵³ of the United States, its soldiers and its society. In others, it was considered a too overt and trivial way of pursuing propagandistic ends⁵⁴, or of preparing Americans and their allies for another conflict⁵⁵. Obviously, there were nuances and differences among the critics. The more left-wing oriented, the more severe they seemed to be: *Cinemanuovo*, probably the most radical cinema review in the 1950s and 1960s, constantly denounced the militaristic attitude of American movies⁵⁶; *Bianco e Nero*, a more moderate magazine (and perhaps the most renowned at the time), was generally less hostile, even though as prompt at recognizing the propagandistic elements of the films⁵⁷. However, everybody, even the authors of the catholic and conservative *La rivista del cinematografo*⁵⁸, identified and outlined the stereotypical militarist thrust of many Hollywood war movies. And nobody appreciated it.

More than anti-Americanism, antifascism was perhaps the true origin of this attitude; or, more precisely, the revulsion felt toward the war propaganda of the past regime, which had built a huge part of its public discourse on martial values: for many Italian intellectuals, the tragic epilogue of the fascist war implied a definitive condemnation for any form of military celebration – no matter if it be democratic or authoritarian.

To sum up, the great majority of critics dismissed or judged as poor the great majority of American films on the Second World War – in the not-so-frequent cases when they considered them: in fact, the most common attitude was simply to ignore motion pictures of this kind⁵⁹. It was not only a matter of content – the way war was represented, or the

ideology that lay beneath the plot – but also of style. Reviewers seemed to be annoyed by the genre itself, by its standardization, its repetitiveness, its use of a limited set of typical characters, situations and narrative standards, which were criticisms that could be extended far beyond war movies to encompass the greater part of Hollywood productions. At their root, there was a deep difference in aesthetic assumptions. Generally speaking, Italian critics upheld a ‘high’ conception of cinema as art and tended to apply to motion pictures the same aesthetic criteria that had been developed to understand other forms of artistic creation – more than visual arts, narrative arts like novels and theatre⁶⁰. This search for a sincere and authentic aesthetic experience had two consequences. On the one hand, it resulted in the neo-realistic canon of the 1940s and 1950s; on the other, it went along with a strong conception of authorship, similar to that proposed by the French *nouvelle vague* in the same years and focused on the key role of the director – the ‘artist’ whose peculiar style should inform the whole movie⁶¹. Both elements represented a strong reason to refuse cinema genres as a whole, and war movies in particular, where the personal poetic of the director was normally overcome by the strict rules of the standardization: the recurring definition of ‘usual war movie’, already highlighted, also had this meaning.

Such an attitude, and especially the centrality of authorship, had a deep impact on European cinema theory and practice, which goes far beyond the scope of this article⁶². What is important to underline here is that it prevented the critics from recognizing the function of stereotypical features, or, more precisely, their effectiveness in creating a shared, uncontroversial and reassuring image of the war. An example will make the issue clearer. *A Walk in the Sun*, as I have already pointed out, was praised because the soldiers it portrayed were ‘authentic fighters who [did] not like war, but [were] forced to make it’; they were ‘authentic men, with real feelings, passions, behaviours’ – and the recurrence of the word ‘authentic’ clearly shows the combination of ideological and aesthetic criteria⁶³. The judgement was probably true, but it did not recognize that the very central element of the plot – the story of a small platoon made up of very different characters, all involved in the tragedy of the war – was one of the most typical elements of the war movie genre, and of American narratives on the conflict: it was the depiction of a democratic war, fought by citizens of all kinds. Far from being an antimilitarist and pacifist *topos*, it represented a key aspect of US narratives on the conflict; but Italian critics seldom recognized it, and mistook it to be a way of criticizing war in itself, in its essence⁶⁴.

The result of such a reduction of war movies to their bombastic, rhetorical tones – although often justified – was the dismissal of the genre itself. Such dismissal transcended ideological and chronological cleavages, was shared by both left-wing and conservative critics, and remained unvaried until at least the late 1960s: in 1965, *Von Ryan's Express* (Robson, 1965) was defined 'a paradoxical adventure of bewildering foolishness'⁶⁵; and in 1966, *The Battle of the Bulge* (Annakin, 1965) was dismissed as 'a "store-movie", which bundled up all the commonplaces, the rodomontades and the "special-effects" of epic-sporty cinematography'⁶⁶. As this attitude was based on clear and defined aesthetic and artistic criteria, it turned into a common evaluation standard, a collective awareness that was shared by the majority of the intellectual community: what we would call, in Bourdieu's words, a common judgement of taste⁶⁷. As any cultural standards, it tended to be only partially explicit; it orientated perceptions and judgements; and it contributed to the definition of a collective identity, which distinguished the insiders from the outsiders – in this case, cultured spectators from the ordinary audience.

The most apparent historical consequence of this phenomenon is the lesser attention paid to the impact that American war movies had on the Italian mass audience. In January 1946, a magazine called *La critica cinematografica* published an article named 'The Freedom of Being Heroes', which compared the coldness previously shown by Italian people towards fascist propaganda films with the enthusiasm that the same audience demonstrated for Hollywood war movies⁶⁸. According to the author, such a different attitude depended on the fact that American propaganda supported a right cause – which was a very interesting suggestion. This was the only article that tried to analyse and explain the success of American war movies among Italian audiences⁶⁹. In the following years, nobody even asked a similar question in critical reviews; the simple fact that war movies were seen by millions of people was basically ignored. And this is quite a clear demonstration of the existence of two different and separated cultural discourses.

The reception: the newspapers

In fact, and despite, the declared goals of some of them⁷⁰, elite magazines were not addressed to a wide audience⁷¹. Popular magazines and newspapers were. As they were explicitly devoted to entertain or orientate public opinion, they had quite a different attitude towards American war movies. On the one hand, they took them into much more

consideration than specialized magazines did. On the other, they showed a greater variety of attitudes, depending on their political allegiance and the period considered.

The first aspect is well demonstrated by the frequency with which Hollywood films on the Second World War appeared in two of the most important Italian newspapers: the moderate *La Stampa* and the communist *L'Unità*. Between 1945 and 1968, the former reviewed more than 100 movies, although in very different ways: sometimes, articles were just short announcements of the staging of the movie; others were (or seemed to be) advertisements of some kind; but mostly there were real reviews, which described how the product was considered worthy of attention. Such an interest is not surprising, considering the pro-Western and pro-American stance of *La Stampa*; but a similar consideration cannot be made for *L'Unità*, whose hostility towards the United States was openly declared. And yet, in the same period, the communist daily reviewed more than 60 Hollywood war movies, even though from a more critical and ideological perspective. This attitude was probably due to the acknowledgement of the wide diffusion that such movies had among Italian audiences, an element that was completely ignored by professional critics, and instead taken into consideration only by the newspaper⁷². This is not surprising, considering the attention that the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) constantly paid to the masses' tastes, and the struggle that the party carried on to keep in contact with them – even when this entailed giving relevance to US popular culture and models⁷³.

The second aspect – the attitude of the Italian daily press towards American war movies – deserves deeper consideration. At first glance, the hard political and ideological fight that characterized the first Cold War years had a more direct reflection on newspapers than on elite magazines. Communist and anti-communist journalists tended to adopt opposite positions on American war movies, the former always criticizing them as militarist⁷⁴, propagandistic⁷⁵ and even fascist⁷⁶, the latter almost thoroughly accepting their representations of the conflict. In fact, *La Stampa* not only constantly underlined the heroism of US soldiers⁷⁷, the Nazi brutality and inhumanity⁷⁸, the righteousness of the war in general; but also accepted other, more subtle, narratives regarding the main battles that involved the US: Pearl Harbor was a 'tragedy'⁷⁹, the Normandy landing the 'event on which the fate of the world depended'⁸⁰; and even the minor episode of the German counterattack in the Ardennes was defined as 'the last burst of the Nazi beast before surrendering'⁸¹. In an opposite vein, *L'Unità* normally found in the movies the confirmation of its anti-American assumptions: a film dedicated to Rommel (*The Desert Fox*, Hathaway 1951) was thus

considered a way to rehabilitate ‘the whole German militarist gang’⁸², the ‘spiritual poverty’ of the US army depicted in *From Here to Eternity* was defined the ‘expression of a capitalist society’⁸³, and *The Caine Mutiny* was interpreted as proof of the McCarthyism of the director, Edward Dmytryk⁸⁴.

Nevertheless, the reception of Hollywood movies on the Second World War was far more complex, and both newspapers showed a variety of nuances in their judgments which is important to outline. First of all, the ideological approach could have contradictory, or even paradoxical, consequences, as in the case of *Battleground*. *La Stampa* described the film as ‘maybe the most convincing war movie among the many that America produced in the last years’, whose effectiveness relied upon its non-rhetorical, realistic cut, which described the ‘tragedy of the war’ and showed a group of soldiers that ‘perform[ed] their duty’ even if ‘they [did] not trust propaganda’⁸⁵. As we have seen, the critics’ consideration of the movie was very similar. On the contrary, *L’Unità* accused the movie of ‘turning the war into a sport match’, thus supporting militarism and ‘the merchants of guns’; moreover, it charged it as historically false, because it did not show the role of the USSR in distracting German forces from the Western Front, thus helping the Allies⁸⁶. It is interesting to note that the more left-wing newspaper did not share the evaluation of the critics of its ‘own’ side (Aristarco, who praised Bastogne, had a Marxist orientation, as well as *Cinemanuovo*, where the movie was repeatedly recalled as a positive example⁸⁷), while the most conservative one did. It is a clear example of the different cultural discourses outlined above: the critics privileged aesthetic criteria, the party newspaper political and propagandistic ones. Sometimes, such a discrepancy did not appear, as in the case of *A Walk in the Sun*, which was praised by *L’Unità* too⁸⁸; but in other cases, it led to opposite evaluations, like for *The North Star* (Milestone, 1943: it was a war-time movie that celebrated the Soviet resistance), which was appreciated by the official communist newspaper⁸⁹ and considered ‘lousy’ by Aristarco⁹⁰.

Secondly, there was not a unique narrative within each political area. The most apparent tension appeared on the communist side, which had to deal with the contradiction between the criticism of the Hollywood myth of the Second World War and the defence of the pivotal role of the same conflict in its own narratives. The Second World War was not only the American ‘good war’, but also the Russian ‘Great Patriotic War’, and the context of the Italian antifascist Resistance. Communists could not put into question the legitimacy of the fight, as it was the main source of their own legitimacy. To solve such a contradiction, they operated in two different ways. Sometimes, they tried to charge Hollywood films with

falsification and distortion, such as in the case of *Battleground*; but it was a narrow and steep path, quite hard to take. It was easier to read the same American movies from their own perspective, highlighting those aspects that were closer to the communist narrative – or, in other words, to oppose distortion with distortion. The main element that could be used for such an operation was the Resistance. *L'Unità* paid specific attention to those (few) American movies that staged the European liberation movements, always reminding the reader of the key role such movements played in the war: for instance, in reviewing *The Great Escape* it underlined the inhumanity of Nazism, which 'pushed many men not to surrender'⁹¹; sometimes, it also accused Hollywood of 'belatedly rediscovering' anti-Nazi fighters⁹² or of representing the 'patriots' bravery' in too light a way⁹³.

La Stampa had fewer problems in dealing with the American myth of the war, which was almost entirely adopted. The newspaper did not hesitate to use a lexicon made up of terms such as 'heroism'⁹⁴, 'bravery'⁹⁵, 'faith'⁹⁶, 'treachery'⁹⁷, which directly referred to a mythical dimension; and, as we have seen, it basically accepted the movies' perspective on the conflict, which openly overestimated the role of the United States. Nevertheless, even the moderate, pro-Western daily got annoyed by the softened and unrealistic narrative proposed by many movies⁹⁸; and when propaganda ended up hiding the tragedy of the war, it did not hesitate to define it as 'really excessive'⁹⁹.

Generally speaking, however, both newspapers could not – or did not want to – deny the basic righteousness of the war, although for different reasons. The widespread acceptance of the negative image of the Nazis – sometimes identified with the whole of the German people, more frequently not – is a clear example. On that, *La Stampa* and *L'Unità* agreed: the former saw in *Lifeboat* (Hitchcock, 1944) the representation of 'two irreconcilable mentalities, that of the zealot [the German] and that of the free man'¹⁰⁰; the latter appreciated *Stalag 17* because it staged 'that hostility against the Nazis which is always useful to reaffirm'¹⁰¹.

Each cultural subject thus chose to focus on some elements of Hollywood movies and to ignore others, and to interpret them from the point of view that best fit its own ideological approach. It was a complex relationship, which clearly showed how the reception of US narratives strongly depended on the attitude and on the perspective of the audience; and this is even more apparent when we consider a peculiar sector of the public, that of the 'intermediaries' (i.e. the newspapers' reviewers), who had in turn their own political and ideological goals.

A further example of such a phenomenon can be found in the Catholic press, and especially in the *Segnalazioni cinematografiche*, the monthly issue published by the 'Centro cattolico cinematografico', which provided spectators and theatre owners with a moral evaluation of the movies released in Italy. On a scale that went from 'appropriate for everybody' to 'forbidden to all', the viewing of American war movies was generally allowed to an adult audience, on the basis of two main criteria. On the one hand, the representation of violence was considered inappropriate for youngsters; on the other, the absence of erotic scenes and of any sexual reference – by far the element that most worried the Church hierarchy – made them absolutely 'safe' for adults. Almost all the 41 war movies reviewed from 1951 to 1968 received this evaluation, with a meaningful exception: *From Here to Eternity* – one of the few movies appreciated by both *L'Unità* and *La Stampa* in the 1950s – was forbidden to all, because of 'the amorality of the characters' and 'the way adultery and divorce [were] depicted'¹⁰². This is not surprising at all, considering the strict control that the Church exercised on public morality in the first post-war decades; and, in fact, the most interesting aspect of the *Segnalazioni* is another one. Not only did they allow the viewing of the movies, but also explicitly appreciated the values they conveyed: patriotism, courage, heroism, *esprit de corps*. *To Hell and Back* was appreciated because it outlined 'the protagonist's goodness of heart, his generosity, his bravery, his sincere comradeship' (and slightly criticized because of 'a dance in revealing clothes')¹⁰³. *PT-109* (Martinson, 1963) was judged 'morally positive' and classified 'for all' because it 'celebrate[d] love of homeland and fighters' altruism'¹⁰⁴.

Such an endorsement was neither obvious nor necessary. Despite the Cold War alliance against communism, the Italian Catholic world was quite suspicious toward American culture, because of its materialism, its hedonism and its liberalism (not to mention its Protestant roots)¹⁰⁵. Although a direct opposition to US war movies would be unlikely, an overt appreciation of them went beyond what was expected from an ally, and should thus be considered a sign of real ideological consonance. The reason is quite easy to detect: among all Hollywood products, films on the Second World War were the least dangerous for public morality, and the values outlined above could be quite easily metabolized by Catholic culture – the explicit refusal of *From Here to Eternity*, the only movie which staged moral ambiguity, is the best counterproof.

We can find further proof of this in the fact that the limited and often superficial criticism to war that could be detected in Hollywood movies – which never concluded with the senselessness and absurdity of the Second World War – was basically accepted in the

Segnalazioni. The moral evaluation of *The Longest Day* is a good example: although the movie ‘repropose[d] basic questions on war and on the ideals that should inspire human coexistence’, ‘the historical events [did] not allow negative considerations’ – which is to say, war was a terrible conundrum, but in *that* case, it was right¹⁰⁶ .

To sum up, Catholic authorities seemed to adopt the American myth of the Second World War entirely. Yet, even in this case there was a clear, and effective, attempt to adapt that myth to their own needs. In Hollywood movies, the values listed above were always connected to the idea of the good war, and to the ideological justifications of the conflict: freedom, democracy, anti-fascism. In the *Segnalazioni*, no such terms are found, not even once; the Second World War was never explicitly recalled, and no nationality was named: in the short synopsis of the movies provided by the review, there were no Russians, no Japanese, no Germans, not even any Americans (not to mention Italians); there was no Nazism, Communism or Democracy. For instance, *The Enemy Below* (Powell, 1957) was summarized as follows: ‘Two men, made enemies by the war, do their duty without hate nor anger. At the end, once they saved their subordinates, they feel closer to one another.’ The ideological aspect of the movie, which clearly traced a difference between the captain of the American destroyer, who believed in the values he is fighting for, and the commander of the German U-boat, who was disgusted by the Nazi regime, was never mentioned¹⁰⁷ . In a word, war was completely de-historicized.

Probably, it was a way to focus better on the moral contents of the motion pictures, which was the main aim of the review, but the effects were wider. Isolating the generic values of military spirit (patriotism, comradeship, heroism and sacrifice) from the specific features of the Second World War, the *Segnalazioni* paved the way for the Italianization of the American representation of the conflict. Such values echoed, in fact, ancient *topoi* of the patriotic and nationalist rhetoric that had characterized official and unofficial Italian narratives since the Risorgimento¹⁰⁸ . Through the adoption of such values (which is to say, by approving and sponsoring them as positive ones), the Church tried to present itself as the real guardian and heir of a national identity (or even pride) which had almost been destroyed by the defeat, the occupation and the civil war. At the same time, though, it made the movies easier to understand and accept for the Italian audience (obviously, within the limits of the diffusion of its own message), hiding any reference to the United States and directly connecting them to a lexicon and a plot that were deep-rooted in popular culture.

It would be interesting to underline how far Catholic authorities were from an unconditioned condemnation of the war, and how poorly radical pacifism was considered in the *Segnalazioni*. (To take just one meaningful example, atomic weapons were considered ‘to be used only as an extrema ratio’, and thus implicitly not absolutely condemned¹⁰⁹. But that would bring us too far.) What is important to note is that cultural and political cleavages were multiple, operating both vertically (separating communists from anti-communists) and horizontally (separating specialized magazines from dailies and tabloid), and sometimes cut through the same ideological areas. Moreover, they were not static, but changed over time, as the diachronic analysis of a key element of the reception of US war movies clearly shows.

The hostility toward any description of the war that underestimated its tragic aspects, which was a constant of the critics’ judgements, was initially shared by national newspapers, as we have seen. It was also present among Catholics: *La rivista del cinematografo* criticized the war-time movie *Crash Dive* as an example of ‘military propaganda’, and appreciated instead *The Story of GI Joe* as ‘a valid accusation of the war’¹¹⁰. Such an annoyance for any softened representation of the conflict – maybe the most widespread attitude towards US war movies in the early post-war years – seemed to fade away by the end of the 1950s. In 1962, *The Longest Day* – the all-star blockbuster about the Normandy landing – came to Italy. *La Stampa* recognized that it was the sum of all war-movie clichés¹¹¹, but did not seem disturbed by that at all, and even praised it as a ‘technically perfect’ movie about ‘the glorious action by the Allies’¹¹². The reaction of *L’Unità* was almost the same: it identified the ‘militarist rhetoric’ of the movie, but did not put stress on it, and defined the film as ‘an exceptional reportage’ about a ‘really dramatic moment’, that did not ‘betray the audience’s expectations’¹¹³. The same could be said about other blockbusters like *The Guns of Navarone* (which, according to *L’Unità*, ‘accurately respect[ed] the genre cliché’, but after all was ‘enjoyable and supported by strong spectacular stuff’¹¹⁴) or *The Battle of the Bulge* (defined by *La Stampa* as ‘the most fascinating epic of manoeuver and mechanized warfare’¹¹⁵), but it would be redundant. It is important to highlight, instead, that in this later age, more or less from 1960 on, militarist rhetoric did not provoke the harsh rejection it had caused in earlier years, and ideological differences were far less important than before. *L’Unità* kept on criticizing Hollywood movies, but mainly because of their lack of technical and artistic quality¹¹⁶ or – as we have seen – their underestimation of the antifascist nature of the conflict, while the global attack on American ideology and way of life became less and less important: a change that can be related to the limited warming of the political climate in

the age of pacific coexistence, and to the rediscovery of the Resistance in Italian public discourse after 1960¹¹⁷.

Such a change in newspapers' attitudes increased the distance that separated them from the critics' reviews, which instead kept focusing on a denunciation of the American militarist stance – while the opinion-makers tended to converge towards a similar, non-conflictual and stereotyped understanding of American narratives on the Second World War, the separation between popular and elitist public discourses seemed to accentuate.

The reception: the wider audience

Newspapers probably tried to get in touch with and interpret public opinion. We have very few and fragmentary traces of the audience's reaction to American movies on the Second World War, but they seem to show a similar evolution. Without developing an in-depth analysis of such sources – which would require a wide-ranging investigation that remains to be done¹¹⁸ – we can support this hypothesis with some examples. The first one is the popular weekly magazine *Hollywood*, which took inspiration from American tabloids devoted to cinema and the star-system and, thus, paid great attention to the US motion-picture industry¹¹⁹. From the late 1940s to the early 1950s, it hosted a column made up of readers' reviews of the films in theatres, which often included war movies. It is almost impossible to assess the authenticity of such reviews or to establish on which basis they were selected: in fact, they could be telling us more about the editors' positions than the readers' attitudes. In both cases, however, it is interesting to note that almost all the reviews noticed and disapproved of the 'usual propagandistic rhetoric'¹²⁰ of Second World War movies. Sometimes, this attitude brought about the rejection of the entire movie¹²¹, at other times, it did not¹²²; but it always went along a basic disbelief and a sort of annoyance towards the stereotyped and heroic image of the conflict that characterized American movies: in the early post-war years, again, memories seemed to be still too vivid and painful to accept Hollywood's epic representation of the war.

The second example is a series of interviews completed between 1962 and 1966 by the Centro Culturale San Fedele (a Catholic cultural institution in Milan) within the audience of its cinema¹²³. An in-depth analysis of this source has already been carried out¹²⁴, and cannot be summarized here. What is important to highlight is that the majority of the

audience – which was mainly composed of upper- and middle-class members – basically shared the ideology of the movies; even when they recognized the rhetorical and propagandistic aspects of a film, they generally approved the values it conveyed. More specifically, it was the idea of the good war, of the war for freedom and justice, which appeared to be the most noted, and the most praised, element of the movies. It is a deep change from the attitude shown by *Hollywood's* readers a decade before: a change that reflects that of *La Stampa* and *L'Unità*, and which is confirmed by a third and last example.

In the second half of the 1950s, American and Italian researchers undertook a sociological inquiry on cinema-going in Scarperia, a mountain village in central Italy¹²⁵. The study showed an interesting difference between older and younger people: while only one fifth of the former considered war movies its favourite genre, the percentage rose to 42% among the latter. Along with the author, the only meaningful difference we can detect between the groups is that the first one was composed of people who had been between 6 and 10 years old during the war, and whose memories of the conflict were thus less clear and vivid. This could be taken, with all the required precautions, as a confirmation that the direct experience of the conflict represented a major limitation to the acceptance of American war narratives (it must be recalled that the majority of war movies came from the United States), and that this led to different patterns of reception, at least in the 1950s.

Conclusion

As a result of this analysis, some conclusions about the reception of American war movies in Italy can be drawn. First of all, quite a clear separation can be detected between the cultural elite, the intermediaries or opinion-makers and the mass audience (on which the sources are quite scarce). The first group quickly elaborated a shared position towards Hollywood motion pictures about the Second World War, made up of an aesthetic dismissal and ideological disapproval; although there were different nuances among the critics, they did not affect the core elements of such a position, which remained unvaried during the first two decades after 1945. The second and third groups, instead, showed many more internal differences, especially in the 1950s; and when such differences faded in the 1960s, they converged toward a basic acceptance of the American representation, which moved further and further from the critics' stance.

More specifically, the idea of the righteousness of the Second World War seemed to become a shared value and a common representation of the conflict. Such an idea, which was at the core of the US myth of the war, fostered the acceptance of many other elements of the American narrative, such as the importance of the US contribution to the anti-Axis fight, or the pivotal role the conflict had in saving human (Western?) civilization¹²⁶. And in turn, the basic sharing of some essential representations of the war fostered the acceptance, sometimes easier and sometimes harder, of American narratives. But why was the idea of the good war widely accepted? I think it was because it easily matched national representations – like the partisan fight against the German invader – and, above all, it tended to confirm the social, political and international order in which Italy was inserted. The convergence of communist and non-communist evaluations described above is a very meaningful hint: communists could not completely refuse the idea of the good war, because the fight against fascism was their main source of legitimacy, both at an international and at a local level.

Had American narratives directly opposed local narratives they probably would have been refused – as the initial negative reaction raised by the underestimation of the tragic aspects of the conflict shows. But they didn't. And as time passed, direct memories tended to fade, while the power of Hollywood myths got stronger and stronger. Thus, while interacting and intertwining with Italian representations of the war, American narratives progressively introduced their own specific perspective into the national public discourse.

To conclude, it would be useful to recall Assmann's claim that 'memory and the global have to be studied together.' Such a reflection can be hardly denied, and I think that the concept of the importation of memories should be the core of many more inquiries in the future. But with an essential amendment: that the age of the 'globalization' of memories should be dated back to much earlier times than what Assmann assumes, as this article clearly shows.

Notes

1. For the Italian case, see Cassamagnaghi, *Immagini dall'America*; Dall'Osso, *Voglia d'America*; D'Attorre, *Nemici per la pelle*; Cavallo, "America sognata, America desiderata;" for a general overview at a European level, see Ellwood, *The Shock of America*; De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*.
2. See Chiarini, *25 aprile*; Focardi, *La guerra della memoria*.
3. See Paggi, *Il popolo dei morti*; Crainz, Pupo, and Salvatici, *Naufraghi della pace*.
4. See Forlenza, "Sacrificial Memory".
5. See Paggi, *Il popolo dei morti*.
6. It is important to specify that in the article the term 'memory' always refers to collective memory, which is to say to the corpus of narratives about the past that are recognized as part of the cultural heritage of a society (or of a sector of it), that are selected for transmission to the following generations, and that contribute to the definition of the characters of the society itself. The concept, which is complex and could have many different nuances (see Forlenza, "Sacrificial Memory," who takes inspiration from J. Assmann, *La memoria culturale* and A. Assmann, *Ricordare* to distinguish between cultural and communicative memory), has a long history: it dates back to the seminal works by Maurice Halbwachs (*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, *La mémoire collective*) and has been used for some major studies in the 1980s and 1990s (Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*; Isnenghi, *I luoghi della memoria*). For more recent investigations, see A. Assmann, *Ricordare*; Assmann and Shortt, *Memory and Political Change*; Winter, Tilmans, and Van Vree, *Performing the Past*.
7. Assmann and Conrad, *Memory in a Global Age*, 2.
8. The reception of cultural products is a growing field of study for cultural history. More specifically, the cinema audience has become the object of a growing amount of scholarship. Investigation has so far mainly focused on the United States (Maltby and Stokes, *Hollywood Spectatorship*; Steiger, *Interpreting Films*), but recent works have widened the perspective towards Europe (Christie, *Audiences*; Biltereyst, Maltby, and Meers, *Cinema Audiences and Modernity*; Maltby and Stokes, *Hollywood Abroad*). On Fascist and wartime Italy, see Courriol, "Reception of War Propaganda;" Ben-Ghiat, "The Italian Colonial Cinema;" on the post-war era, see Treveri-Gennari, O'Rawe, and Hipkins "In Search of Italian Cinema Audiences".

9. On this issue, see Terkel, "The Good War;" Wynn, "The 'Good War'", Stoler, *The Second World War*.
10. Muscio, "Cinema".
11. De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*.
12. See Di Nolfo, *La diplomazia del cinema americano*; Cambi, *Diplomazia di celluloidi?*
13. Vice, "Miscellanea," *Cinema. Quindicinale di divulgazione cinematografica*, July 30, 1952.
14. See Tullio Kezich, "The Young Lions" [I giovani leoni], *Bianco e nero*, July 1958. See also Bruti Liberati, *Guerra e memoria*. The movie was inspired by Shaw, *The Young Lions*.
15. See "Film delle varie nazionalità che hanno superato i 100 milioni di incasso lordo nelle prime visioni delle città capozona," *Il giornale dello spettacolo*, March 30, 1957.
16. "Elenco dei film nazionali e stranieri che hanno conseguito i maggiori incassi," *Lo spettacolo*, April–June 1959
17. "Film graduati secondo gli incassi lordi conseguiti," *Lo spettacolo*, January–March 1963.
18. "Film graduati secondo gli incassi lordi conseguiti," *Lo spettacolo*, October–December 1964.
19. Basinger, *The World War 2 Combat Film*.
20. An effective synthesis of the genre's features is in Chapman, *War and Film*.
21. Alonge, *Cinema e guerra*.
22. Cambi, *Diplomazia di celluloidi?*, 125.
23. On USIS and on American propaganda agencies in Italy, see Bruti Liberati, *Guerra e memoria*; Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*; Tobia, *Advertising America*.
24. The documentaries went through quite a complex archival history, and are currently deposited at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome (Ellwood, "The USIS-Trieste Collection;" Barbera and Tosatti, *United States Information Service*; Pellicchia *L'amico americano*). They are available online on the YouTube channel of the Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio e Democratico (AAMOD):
(<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLr4dgCI4o5-wX5IL11cVR1lk8-iRy84bt>).

25. The documentary, in fact, was realized by the Italian Istituto Luce, not by the USIS. As it is contained in the USIS material stored at the ACS, it was probably distributed and/or staged by the USIS. It can be found online at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHygBss8jxo&index=77&list=PLr4dgCI4o5-wX5IL11cVR1lk8-iRy84bt>.

26. In the *Catalogo dei libri in italiano nelle biblioteche americane USIS in Italia*, Roma, USIS, 1958 some meaningful titles, such as Clark, *5° armata Americana* and Eisenhower, *Crociata in Europa*, were recalled.

27. In fact, Belmonte (in *Selling the American Way*, which analyses US propaganda themes in depth), never mentions the American participation in the Second World War among them.

28. Historians have long since underlined that, although there were close contacts among the majors and the Department of State's officers, Hollywood always pursued its own commercial goals, which were distinct, and often different, from US foreign politics (Swann, "Il 'Piccolo Dipartimento di Stato';" Ellwood, *Il cinema e la proiezione del modello americano*). See, also, on the German case, Borchers, "Hollywood as Reeducator," which draws similar conclusions.

29. The definition of the Resistance as a *secondo Risorgimento* dates back to the self-representation of the partisans during the war, and found an official expression as early as in 1955, in a publication issued by the Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato (Garosci, *Il secondo Risorgimento*). For an in-depth analysis of the various meanings that the fight had for the partisans, see Pavone, *Una guerra civile*.

30. On the myth of the USSR in post-war Italy, see Fiume, *Nel nome di Stalin*; D'Attorre, *Nemici per la pelle*; Flores and Gori, *Il mito dell'URSS*.

31. On these issues, see Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano*; Fogu, "Italiani brava gente;" Del Boca, *Italiani brava gente?*; Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano*.

32. See especially Forlenza, "Sacrificial Memory;" Paggi, *Il popolo dei morti*.

33. On the Italian press in the post-war years, see Farinelli, *Storia del giornalismo italiano*; Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano*; Bergamini, *La democrazia della stampa*.

34. Pezzotta, *La critica cinematografica*.

35. Guido Aristarco, "I sacrificati" [They Were Expendable], *Cinema*, November 16, 1949.

36. "They Were Expendable", *Bianco e nero*, April 1950.

37. See Vice, "Iwo Jima (Sands of Iwo Jima)", *Cinema*, December 1, 1950.
38. See Nino Ghelli, "Stalag 17", *Bianco e Nero*, June 1954.
39. See "I diavoli del Pacifico" (review of *Between Heaven and Hell*), *Cinema nuovo*, January 15, 1957.
40. "I falchi di Rangoon" (review of *Flying Tigers* [Miller, 1942]), *Rivista del cinematografo*, June 1950.
41. Guido Aristarco, "Bastogne", *Cinema*, May 30, 1950. Similar evaluations could be found in "Battleground", *Bianco e nero*, October 1950.
42. Vice, "Miscellanea", *Cinema*, June 30, 1952.
43. Jarvie, *Free Trade as Cultural Threat*.
44. An interesting inquiry on such a complex issue is Paggi, *Il popolo dei morti*.
45. Giulio Cesare Castello, "Stalag 17", *Cinema*, January 1954.
46. G.ca, "Passeggiata al sole", *Bianco e nero*, January 1949.
47. "Duello nell'atlantico", *Cinemanuovo*, February 15, 1958.
48. See Gian Maria Guglielmino, "La guerra nel film americano", *Cinema*, October 15, 1949.
49. Luigi Chiarini, "I grimaldelli degli pseudocritici", *Cinemanuovo*, May 15, 1957.
50. Giacomini, *I partigiani della pace*; Cerrai, *I partigiani della pace in Italia*.
51. On the close relation between Italian intellectuals and the Communist party, see the classic work by Ajello, *Intellettuali e PCI*.
52. Nino Ghello, "From Here to Eternity" [Da qui all'eternità], *Bianco e nero*, November–December 1954. See also Nino Ghelli, "Stalag 17", *Bianco e nero*, June 1954.
53. "Prima vittoria", *Cinemanuovo*, January–February 1966.
54. See Gian Maria Guglielmino, "La guerra nel film americano ...", *Cinema*, October 15, 1949.
55. See Vice, "Iwo Jima", *Cinema*, December 1, 1950.
56. See for instance "Stalag 17", *Cinemanuovo*, April 1, 1954; Lo Duca, "Le cento maniere di cucinare un uovo", May 1, 1954; "Duello nell'Atlantico", February 15, 1958; a.f., "Prima vittoria", January–February 1966.

57. See Ernesto G. Laura, "The Best Years of Our Lives" [I migliori anni della nostra vita], *Bianco e Nero*, May 1959; Fernaldo Di Giammatteo, "Judgement in Nuremberg" [Vincitori e vinti], January 1962.
58. Which often spoke of the 'typical war movies' ["I falchi di Rangoon", *La rivista del cinematografo*, June 1950; "Iwo Jima", December 1950].
59. Between 1945 and 1968, *Bianco e Nero* reviewed only 17 American movies dealing with the Second World War, *Cinemanuovo* just one more – including in both cases *Judgement in Nuremberg* (Kramer, 1961) and *The Great Dictator* (Chaplin, 1940), which are not war movies *strictu sensu*.
60. Bioni, *La critica cinematografica*.
61. In some cases, Italian reviewers discussed the 'loyalty' of a director to himself (which in most cases meant to the image they had of him) and criticized his surrender to the stereotype of the genre, or to the need of propaganda. See for instance Giorgio N. Fenin, "'Marines' all'assalto degli schermi di New York", *Cinema*, February 1, 1951, where the passage of the director Lewis Milestone from the pacifist *All Quiet on Western Front* (1930) to the militarist *The Halls of Montezuma* (1951) is deeply criticized.
62. See on this issue Bordwell and Thompson, *Film History*, chapter 19, "Art Cinema and the Idea of Authorship".
63. G.ca., "Passeggiata al sole", *Bianco e nero*, January 1949.
64. In fact, *The Story of GI Joe* (Wellmann, 1945), another movie praised as anti-militarist by Italian critics, is considered by Basinger as 'celebratory of the American common man, a democratic look at the forces who fought for democracy' (Basinger, *The World War 2 Combat Film*, 129).
65. Leonardo Autera, "Von Ryan's Express" [Il colonnello Von Ryan], *Bianco e Nero*, October–November 1965.
66. "La battaglia dei giganti", *Cinemanuovo*, November–December 1966.
67. Bourdieu, *La distinction*.
68. Lorenzo Bocchi, "Libertà di essere eroi", *La critica cinematografica*, January 1946.
69. It is worth underlining that *La critica cinematografica* was communist-oriented (or at least this is what can be inferred from the presence of a column devoted to 'Sovietic cinema' and of some articles by Il'ja Ehrenburg). As the article dates back to January 1946, it can be read

as a hint that the Communists' attitude towards US films was more open and attentive before the outbreak of the Cold War; and that the following dismissal of Hollywood war movies was also due to the ideological stiffening of the late 1940s.

70. The subtitle of *Cinema* was "Bimonthly for cinematographic popularization" [Settimanale di divulgazione cinematografica].

71. This does not mean that the mass audience was completely unaware of the critics' stances. As has been detected by a recent study on cinema-going in Rome in the 1950s, some spectators belonging to the lower classes did receive some echo of the debate on Neo-realism, on its function and importance (even though they kept on loving and seeing Hollywood products). See Treveri et al., "In Search of Italian Cinema Audiences". Nevertheless, in the same article it is noted that 'Italian intellectuals of the left view themselves as separate from this national audience' (547).

72. See for instance "Sugli schermi – Malesia", *L'Unità*, April 29, 1950. The review criticized the movie (*Malaya*, Thorpe 1949), but recognized it had had great success and tried to explain it with the fame of the actors, James Stewart and Spencer Tracy.

73. On this issue, see the classic work by Stephen Gundle, *I comunisti italiani*.

74. See for instance "Sugli schermi – Cielo di fuoco", *L'Unità*, April 9, 1950, review of *Twelve o'Clock High* (King, 1949).

75. See for instance "Gli spettacoli di oggi – Le ali delle aquile", *L'Unità*, October 31, 1957, review of *The Wings of Eagles* (Ford, 1957).

76. See Ugo Casiraghi, "Un ammutinamento su una nave Americana", *L'Unità*, September 2, 1954, review of *The Caine Mutiny* (Dmytryk, 1954).

77. See Vice, "Sullo schermo", *La Stampa*, 22 June 1968, review of *The Longest Hundred Miles* (Weis, 1967), which speaks of 'the valorous resistance of Americans' against Japanese invaders in the Philippines.

78. See "Spettacoli. Cinema", *La Stampa*, June 27, 1947, review of *Man Hunt* (Lang, 1941), which speaks of 'the Nazi Hydra'.

79. "Tragico militare in un film di Zinnemann", *La Stampa*, October 10, 1954, review of *From Here to Eternity* (Zinnemann, 1953).

80. L. Mannelli, "I generali che diressero lo sbarco in Normandia questa sera alla prima de *Il giorno più lungo*", *La Stampa*, September 25, 1962; see also "Un idillio di guerra", *La*

Stampa, August 31, 1956, review of *D-Day the Sixth of June* (Koster, 1956), where the Normandy landing is defined as a 'fateful' moment of the conflict.

81. Vice, review of *The Battle of the Bulge*, *La Stampa*, September 16, 1966.

82. Teresa Regard, "Il film su Rommel cattivo affare per la Fox", *L'Unità*, November 2, 1951.

83. Aldo Scagnetti, "Le prime a Roma – Da qui all'eternità", *L'Unità*, October 9, 1954. It must be underlined that it was precisely this representation that made the reviewer appreciate the movie.

84. Ugo Casiraghi, "Un ammutinamento su una nave americana", *L'Unità*, September 2, 1954.

85. "Un bel film di guerra", *Stampasera*, May 20, 1950.

86. "Guerra in celluloide - Perché gli americani continuano a produrre in continuazione film che esaltano il massacro?", *L'Unità*, May 17, 1950.

87. See "All'inferno e ritorno", *Cinemanuovo*, February 25, 1956; "La battaglia dei giganti", November–December 1966.

88. See Vice, "*Salerno ora X* di Lewis Milestone", *L'Unità*, July 3, 1952.

89. See *ibid.*

90. Guido Aristarco, "Fuoco a Oriente" [The North Star], *Cinema*, May 1949.

91. "Le prime – La grande fuga", *L'Unità*, August 31, 1963.

92. See "La settima croce", *L'Unità*, January 4, 1948, review of *The Seventh Cross* (Zinnemann, 1943).

93. "Le prime – Il treno", *L'Unità*, October 1964, review of *The Train* (Frankenheimer, 1964).

94. See for instance Vice, "Sullo schermo", *La Stampa*, November 11, 1950, review of *Wake Island* (Farrow, 1942): 'the heroic defense that the American garrison [...] in a desperate condition, opposed to the invaders'.

95. See "Guida dei film – Falchi in picchiata", *La Stampa*, January 7, 1951, review of *Fighter Squadron* (Walsh, 1948): 'it tells [...] the bravery of some pilot of American fighters'.

96. See Vice, "Un idillio di guerra e Puccini in cinemascope", *La Stampa*, August 31, 1956, where the Normandy landing is defined a 'fateful' day.

97. See I.p., "Un eroe e un farabutto", *La Stampa*, December 1, 1950, review of *Task Force* (Daves, 1949), which speaks of the 'treachery of Pearl Harbor'.
98. See for instance "Filo spinato", *La Stampa*, March 25, 1953, which defines *The Cross of Lorraine* (Garnett, 1943) "too adventurous and rather implausible."
99. "Furbi contro scemi", *Stampasera*, March 31, 1950, review of *Desperate Journey* (Walsh, 1942).
100. "Due mondi in un battello", *La Stampa*, April 3, 1948.
101. Vice, "A video spento", *L'Unità*, December 5, 1967.
102. "Da qui all'eternità", *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* 36 (1954).
103. "All'inferno e ritorno", *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* 39 (1956).
104. "Posto di combattimento", *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* 40 (1956).
105. On Catholic anticommunism, see Forlenza, "The Enemy Within"; on the reaction of the Church to Protestant proselytizing, see Domenico, "*For The Cause of Christ Here in Italy*".
106. "Il giorno più lungo", *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* 53 (1963).
107. "Duello nell'Atlantico", *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* 53 (1958).
108. The birth and evolution of patriotic narratives in Italy has been addressed by a huge number of studies, which cannot be recalled here. Some of the most important works on this issue are Isnenghi, *Il mito della Grande guerra*; Gentile, *La Grande Italia*; Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento*.
109. "La morte è discesa a Hiroshima", *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* 29 (1951), review of *The Beginning of the End* (Taurog, 1947).
110. See "Segnalazioni", *La rivista del cinematografo*, May 1949 and July 1949.
111. "Il giorno più lungo", *La Stampa*, January 25, 1963.
112. L. Mannucci, "I generali che diressero lo sbarco in Normandia questa sera alla prima de *Il giorno più lungo*", *La Stampa*, September 25, 1962.
113. "Il giorno più lungo", *L'Unità*, October 27, 1962.
114. "Le prime rappresentazioni. I cannoni di Navarone", *L'Unità*, 8 October 1961.
115. "'Tigre' contro 'Sherman' nella battaglia delle Ardenne", *La Stampa*, September 17, 1966.

116. See, for instance, “*Eroi in guerra falliti in amore*”, *L’Unità*, May 13, 1965, where *In Harm’s Way* (Preminger, 1965) is defined ‘as conventional as possible’; in the reviewer’s opinion, the reduction of the Pacific war, which was ‘something serious’, to a feuilleton ‘should displease the Americans first’.

117. On this issue, see Focardi, *La guerra della memoria*; Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance*.

118. A large-scale project on audiences and cinema-going in 1950s Italy is being carried out by a research group based at the University of Bristol. For a detailed description of the project, a presentation of the already accomplished results, and a list of publications, see the website: <http://italiancinemaaudiences.org/>.

119. For an overall analysis of the magazine, see Muscio, “Cinema: Produzione e modelli sociali”.

120. Guido Gerosa, “Obiettivo Burma”, *Hollywood*, October 29, 1949, review of *Objective, Burma!* (Walsh, 1945).

121. See for instance Annamaria Dondi, “I guerriglieri delle Filippine”, *Hollywood*, November 10, 1951, review of *American Guerrillas in the Philippines* (Lang, 1950).

122. See, for instance, Antonietta Manganelli, “Agguato sul fondo”, *Hollywood*, February 19, 1949, review of *Crash Dive* (Mayo, 1943): the movie is considered similar to ‘all war movies’, but nonetheless appreciated.

123. The interviews were published in *Film discussi insieme*, the annual issue of the Centro San Fedele.

124. Pipitone, “Imported Memories”.

125. See Malcolm MacLean, “Preferenze cinematografiche a Scarperia”, *Bianco e Nero*, February 1958.

126. For instance, *L’Unità* spoke of a ‘huge moral potential coming from the fight against Fascist barbarity’ [“Okinawa, Isola del terrore”, *L’Unità*, October 31, 1951].

127. Piedmontese Institute for the Study of the Resistance and Contemporary Society.

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